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BY mtt NARS, DATE 11-14-78

Op-61B
19 June 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

Subject: Berlin (U)

1. Mr. Khrushchev's deliberate initiation and intensification of the Berlin crisis may well be prompted by a conviction that the time is propitious for the removal of the West Berlin enclave. This is his ostensible motivation, and such an interpretation appears to be supported by a degree of logic. However, there are considerations which militate against accepting this rationale completely.
2. Khrushchev is fully aware of the fundamental nature of the Berlin problem to the United States. He knows that we know that a firm U.S. stand is essential to the preservation of the NATO alliance and to the power position of the U.S. in Western Europe and eventually in the world. Understanding this, even if he considers that we have weakened in the strength of our convictions, he must realize that the stark confrontation he has presented us on Berlin is extremely hazardous. Khrushchev has stated that he does not want a war over Berlin. He most certainly does not want an all-out nuclear war. It is probable that he does not even want to hazard current Soviet momentum by any kind of a war.
3. If a Berlin settlement with significant advantage to the USSR appears to Khrushchev to be unattainable, it is quite possible that he would seek a quid pro quo elsewhere in exchange for a deferment of a

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solution on Berlin. It may be that he has deliberately raised the alarm on Berlin in order to seek concessions elsewhere. One of the most dangerous areas for seeking such a concession would be Southeast Asia. He may envision a relaxation of the Berlin crisis in exchange for an understanding that the U.S. would not forcefully resist further Communist expansion in Southeast Asia.

4. As tension mounts in Europe, there will be an increasingly strong tendency to focus our concern on Berlin. The Joint Chiefs of Staff and others responsible for planning and the formulation of national policy should bear in mind that faced with an impasse on Berlin, the Soviets may seek to obtain advantage elsewhere. U.S. acceptance of such an alternative would perhaps be less dramatic than a Berlin defeat in undermining U.S. leadership of the Free World, but the end result would be no less certain.

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